

Press Conference

Time: Friday, December 7, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

Place: Murrow Room, National Press Club, Washington, DC

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State Energy Officials Call for Increased Federal Funding for Energy Assistance, Weatherization and Energy Efficiency to Address Rising Energy Prices

Rising energy prices are placing an increasing burden on families. States are responding by offering grant assistance to help pay energy bills and grant and loan programs to help families reduce energy consumption by installing energy efficiency measures.

States can't do it alone. To address the immediate affordability concerns this winter, states are calling on the Congress to increase funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) by \$1 billion, Weatherization by \$41 million to \$245 million and State Energy Program from \$50 million to \$65 million.

These state programs work in tandem to create a short and long term energy strategy that helps all sectors of the economy. For those who can afford to invest in the newest efficiency technologies, Energy Star appliances, Home Performance standards for housing, and investments in energy efficiency measures for the home are accessible and pay for themselves quickly. For those who don't have the resources, help is available through these programs so low-income Americans are not left "out in the cold" to access energy efficiency services for their homes.

State officials will:

- Discuss the need for increased emergency federal funding this winter to help families maintain access to affordable energy as well as provide energy efficiency services to help reduce demand for energy.
- Discuss grant and loan programs being offered by states to help families cope with high energy bills.
- Release the results of a national survey on steps states are taking in the event that federal energy assistance funding is not increased to adjust to higher energy costs.

National Energy Assistance Directors' Association
National Association of State Community Services Programs
National Association of State Energy Officials

Comments from State Energy Officials

"Families are facing rising energy costs to heat their homes, cook their food, and keep the lights burning," commented Timothy Warfield, Executive Director of the National Association for State Community Services Programs. "And those families are hit hard twice when they go to the pump to buy gas to travel to work everyday or travel to the store to get food and medicine," said Mr. Warfield.

Jo-Ann Choate, Chair of the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association and the Maine LIHEAP Director, said "Many families have no excess income to pay for these added energy costs. They are going to go without heat, or food, or medicine, or other life supporting needs to pay these higher energy costs," Ms. Choate further stated. "We can stop this. We can improve the lives of millions of families worse off than we are. We simply need to fully fund the first response programs like LIHEAP and Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) to help deal with the emergency today while helping conserve energy in the future."

Dub Taylor, Chairman of the National Association of State Energy Officials and the Texas State Energy Director, said “The federally-funded State Energy Program (SEP) matches state funds and produces enormous benefits to all consumers. These funds go towards placing energy efficient appliances in homes and they help small businesses, schools, hospitals and local governments improve energy efficiency in their facilities.

States are strengthening building energy codes, declaring sales tax holidays for Energy Star products, investing in alternative motor fuels and working to make it easier for consumers to make the right energy decisions. States are committed to reducing dependency on imported oil, diversifying the fuel mix, and getting electricity and natural gas consumers and utilities to invest in energy efficient technology.” Tom Plant, Director of the Colorado Governor’s Energy Office, added “By reducing energy costs for people living paycheck to paycheck, we keep low income families from having to make a choice between heat and food, or between electricity and medication - those are choices no American should have to make.”

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